Carlyle's Theory of the Hero and its Importance in History

by

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Thesis

CARLYLE'S THEORY OF THE HERO AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN HISTORY

by

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Abstract

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Introduction

The topic I have chosen is Carlyle's Theory of the Hero and its Importance in History. I shall try to show the significance of this theory of the hero in the history he wrote himself through a study of the French Revolution and Frederick the Great. Throughout the thesis I shall try to evaluate this proposition in relation to the general theory of history and my conclusion will be a criticism of it.

In my first chapter I shall give a few summary statements concerning Carlyle's philosophy which will serve as a basis for understanding the rest of the paper. I shall then deal briefly with two collections of his essays which, with the exception of two or three, do not have anything specific to say about history. My last section will deal very briefly with Past and Present.

My second chapter will deal with Sartor Resartus. This might be called his Credo which he develops further in his later works. I shall summarize the book showing some of the biographical significance as well as the philosophy in it.

Heroes and Hero Worship will be the subject of my third chapter. I shall summarize each lecture, relating it to the others. By the end of this chapter we should see pretty clearly what Carlyle means by a hero and how prominent he is in the author's philosophy.

Now we shall see how Carlyle uses his hero when he is actually writing history. I have chosen the French Revolution and Frederick the Great to illustrate this.

My sixth chapter will be concerned with a few criticisms of Carlyle from other writers.

In my last chapter I shall give my own estimation of him.

Chapter I

Carlyle's philosophy is a form of German Transcendentalism with a strong basis of Scotch Calvinism. He firmly believes that this is a good world ruled by God. It is a world of truth if man would only sincerely and earnestly seek for the truth. Like Fichte he thought of the true world as a world of spirit clothed in flesh. Man must sincerely seek for the relation between Nature and his own spirit. By sincerity I think Carlyle meant an honest and unwavering faith in what he is searching for and the ability to make his actions accord with the truth as he gradually discovers it for himself. In what I have read of Carlyle I do not know whether he believed in a personal God or not. I don't think he knew wither. When the influence of Fichte was uppermost God was a spirit governing the whole world.

Scotch Calvinism taught him something different and he was never able fully to shake off its influence. He rid himself of its dogmas but its insistence on man's duty to God and his fellowmen Carlyle never lost, in fact it grew stronger as Carlyle grew older. It was the influence of his Scotch Calvinism with the indispensable aid of his keenly scrutinizing and penetrating mind that enabled him to see the evils of the mechanistic theory of life which were increasing daily. It is against this mechanism that Carlyle's whole energy was spent. This theory degraded man and made him nothing but a machine.

Man was no longer master of his fate. This theory Carlyle fought with everything he had. Out of it grew his hero.

Carlyle saw around him the terrors of the poor. He felt that this nightmare was caused by the irresponsibility of the aristocracy. They were the rightful rulers of England but they had not faithfully performed their stewardship. Mankind must have leaders or revolutions and anarchy will result. He knew what irresponsibility and idleness had done in France and he feared the same fate for England as conditions grew worse in the 1830's and '40's.

Unlike many, he did not turn to democracy as a solution. He felt that the uneducated masses were not capable of ruling themselves. Educated leaders must be trained with an accurate sense of social responsibility. Hero-worship, he frequently moaned, had almost passed from the earth. Men were no longer taught to reverence and obey their rightful leaders. This was not the fault of the men; it was the fault of the leaders. The more he studied the French Revolution and those that came later in France, the more he saw the uprisings of the workers in England, the more Carlyle was turned against democracy and the louder he cried for leaders.

This humanitarian interest arose out of his Calvinism with its emphasis on duty. Calvinism itself is not humanitarian but in comparison with the mechanistic theory then prevalent it was decidedly so. It at least taught that man by the grace of God could overcome the world. Carlyle's own

nature gave the humanitarian aspect to his Calvinism.

Carlyle was a socialist in that he saw the miseries of the poor and actively went about trying to remedy the situation. But in his solution he is neither democratic not socialistic, but aristocratic. It is through responsible leaders, not through universal suffrage that the problem will be solved according to Carlyle. What my opinion of this solution is will come later. Suffice it to say here that for the times the theory was very important and still is.

His German Transcendentalism comes out in his belief that the hero must seek truth in God and establish a communion between his own spirit and the spirit of the world. This theory was influenced by Nietze, Richter, possibly Hegel, and especially Fichte and his theory of the superman. We shall see more of this when we discuss specifically the hero.

The first essay I shall take up is "On History".[1] At the beginning he says, "History, as it lies at the root of all science, is the first distinct product of man's spiritual nature, his earliest expression of what can be called thought".[2] We see here the emphasis on man's spiritual nature which we will find throughout Carlyle. He then discusses the early tribes. They too left their history in wampum belts, earth mounds, stone heaps. All that we do and say is history. "Examine history for it is 'Philosophy teaching by experience'".[3]

1 T. Carlyle, English and Other Critical Essays, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., pp. 80-91

2 Ibid., p. 80

3 Ibid., p. 81

The key sentence in his theory of history is this, "History is the essence of innumerable biographies."[4] Here we see the beginnings of his hero. History is made by men. If we wish to understand history we must understand the lives of the great men of the period. He is here fighting the machine. Man is the important factor, not the movements, the battles, the elections, the laws passed. Battles, wars, laws pass away. Traditions, daily habits of all people make history. It is the people that make the age live. They are the soul which is clothed by the outward events. They are the spirit of each age.

In order to understand an historical event we must realize that it is the product of all the events that have come before. History is cumulative. It is a whole. "Only in the Whole is the Partial to be truly discerned."[5] The idea of the whole is definitely Fichtean. We cannot understand the specific events of history until we see the frame into which they fit. Everything must be related to the Whole before we can really know it.

Again we see the emphasis on the spiritual, "For man's true advantage, not the outward condition of his life, but the inward and spiritual, is of prime influence; not the form of Government he lives under, and the power he can accumulate there, but the Church he is a member of and the degree of moral elevation he can acquire by means of its instruction."[6] We see here a devoutly religious man.

4 Ibid., p. 82

5 Ibid., p. 86

6 Ibid., p. 88

In this statement lies the essence of Carlyle's hero. He must first of all be a spiritual man. It is man's moral nature that decides his greatness. Over and over again in Heroes and Hero Worship Carlyle says that the first requirement of a hero is that he be sincere; sincere in his search for the truth, allying his own spirit with that of his God.

According to Carlyle we should have many kinds of historians. Here he is criticizing the emphasis on political history that was so prevalent in his time. He was starting the trend away from a narrow political interpretation to a broader and more comprehensive picture. He was trying to reach his goal of the "whole". There should be a history of philosophy which is the proper province of the Church, for, as Carlyle says, in a healthy state the philosopher and priest are one and the same. There should be a history of poetry which includes art and literature, histories of medicine, mathematics, astronomy, commerce, chivalry, science, practical arts, institutions, laws, constitutions, and inventions. In other words, all of man's activities should be surveyed in a complete history. It is only then that the historian comes anywhere near his goal of the "whole" which he may never fully reach. Although he can never attain it fully, it is nevertheless the duty of the true historian to struggle ever to reach this conception of the "whole".

Three years later Carlyle wrote another essay "On History Again".[7] In it he gives the reason most history teachers use

7 T. Carlyle, English and Other Critical Essays, pp.91-100

for studying history. "Only he who understands what has been can understand what should be and will be".[8] He discusses universal history as it is in his day. It is in such a miserable state due to want of honesty and understanding. Without honesty and understanding one cannot attain sincerity and without sincerity, says Carlyle, no man can be great. The rest of the essay is spent in criticising the history of his day. History must be compressed. Proper proportion should be maintained. (He must have forgotten these principles when he wrote Frederick.) First things should be put first. He mentions as an illustration of this the fact that the story of Hengst and Horsa fills only half a page while the description of the visit of the Lord Mayor to London is enclosed in a whole volume! He finishes the essay by saying that "history is the true epic poem."[9] The epic poem is the whole toward which the historian is struggling. To Carlyle history is a living song, not a dryasdust political chronicle. It is above all a story of living people. Carlyle says elsewhere that we must become a part of the period in which we write. Unless we can make ourselves feel as the people felt at the time we cannot make history and epic poem.

The next essay I want to discuss is the one on "Biography"[10] Carlyle has said that history is made up of innumerable biographies. It is pertinent for us to see what he thinks biog-

8 Ibid., p. 92

9 Ibid., p. 99

10 Ibid., pp. 65-80

graphy should be. Our interest in biography, according to Carlyle, is inspired by a scientific and poetic interest. It is scientific because every human being is faced with the problem of existence in both its original and universal aspects. It is poetic because it is the struggle of human freewill against material necessity. Carlyle is stating in a different way his belief that man is superior to a machine, that human beings are not wholly explained or understood by a set of natural laws.

One of the causes of the state of the world is that there is no interest in biography. Carlyle states this differently later when he says that there is no longer any hero worship. Until people reach again the state where they recognize and revere a great man the condition of the world will remain the same.

"Man's life, now, as of old, is the genuine word of God; wherever there is a man, a God also is revealed, and all that is godlike, a whole epitome of the infinite, with its meanings, lies enfolded in the Life of every Man."[11] This is Carlyle's humanitarianism at its best. Man is a noble creation of God and as such he is worthy of reverence. When a man strives with all the power he has to express the Godlike in himself he is worthy to be called a hero and be obeyed by other human beings. Every man, whether he attain the status of a hero or no, deserves to be treated as a creature of God, not as an animal or a machine but here to

[11] Ibid., p. 72

slave and story. All of Carlyle's interest in the conditions of the industrial and agricultural poor which he struggled all his life to better can be traced to the philosophy expressed in this statement by him. It is a magnificent interpretation and one which our generation is too inclined to ignore. A little of this awe at the wonders of men would be very good for us.

Another interesting statement of the author's is this, "The Past is all holy to us, the Dead are all holy, even they that were base and wicked while alive."[12] With this idea I cannot agree. The Past should not be all holy. If we make it so we lose much of the truth that history has to show us. Reverence our great men we must, but it is also necessary that we bring our critical faculties with us, that we see the evil as well as the good, so that we can cast off the evil. Only so can we make any progress. We should not throw dirt for the sake of doing so, but we must not go to the opposite and disregard the dirt that is unmistakably there.

He closes the essay with the reminder that when we look at history as biography we should have a loving heart. This Carlyle undoubtedly had and without it one cannot form a sympathetic or understanding picture of any period.

In 1831 Carlyle published the essay, "Characteristics".[13] In it he sets forth the weaknesses of the present society

12 Ibid., p. 75

13 T. Carlyle, Scottish and Other Miscellanies, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

with suggestions as to why it is so. It was a courageous piece of writing as was all of Carlyle's work because it pointed the finger of accusation directly at the men in power. The main thesis at the beginning and throughout the essay is that a healthy society works spontaneously, unconsciously. When a society starts to analyze itself, its own structure and functions, it becomes artificial. As we have seen before, sincerity is the mark of greatness in a society as well as in a hero; artificiality is the source of evil. The author then tells about man's position in society. "It is in Society that man first feels what he is; first becomes what he can be."[14] Man has two duties, one to what is highest in himself, the other to his neighbor. In society there is a "chance for soul to work upon soul, of an accumulation of a common store of thought!"[15] As long as man feels sincerely his duties to society that society is sincere. It becomes artificial because man seeks his own pleasure above that of the society. Man forms a society so that the weak man may find protection and in return for this he gives willing and loyal obedience.

Carlyle says of the present society that it is too self-conscious and it needs the drugs of cooperative societies, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, etc. "Man has subdued this Planet, his habitation and inheritence; yet reaps no profit from the victory."[16] One result of this self-conscious

14 Ibid., p. 194

15 Loc. cit.

16 Ibid., p. 203

attitude is the existence of extremes of wealth and poverty and ignorance. Religion and literature too are self-conscious, and hence are less creative and vital. "The mere existence and necessity of a Philosophy is an evil. Man is sent hither not to question, but to work: "The end of man'it was long ago written 'is an Action, not a Thought.'"[17] We see Carlyle in this as a man of action. This was influenced by his great respect for his father who was a man of action working as a common master-mason. Carlyle reverenced work as his father had done. Action was important at that time. But how can man act wisely without questioning? It seems to me man must question as well as act. When we look at the history of this period it is easy to see why Carlyle emphasized action. It was due to the inaction of the upper classes that the lower classes were in such a state, at least according to our author. They spent their time in trying to be happy. Carlyle answers them by the following statements. "In no time was man's life what he calls a happy one; in no time can it be so."[18] " Unhappier are they to whom a higher instinct has been given; who struggle to be persons, not machines; to whom the Universe is not a warehouse, or at best a fancy-bazaar, but a mystic temple and a hall of doom."[19] It is man's duty to help others, not to seek hos own pleasure.

17 Ibid., p. 206

18 Ibid., p. 209

19 Ibid., p. 211

Carlyle says of this skepticism and questioning, "the fever of skepticism must needs burn itself out, and burn out by the impurities that cause it; then again will there be clearness, health."[20] We must get back to the age where we believed in the nobility of man and his ability to become master of himself and of his life. It seems to me that skepticism has an important role to play. It teaches us to question much that ought to be questioned, but a healthy skepticism does not mean that we need to cast aside all belief. We do not degrade man by a skeptical attitude; we merely cease to worship him as a divinity, recognizing that he too is human. This does not mean that we do not consider a certain man greater than we; it just signifies that we do not set him up as a little tin god. It is in periods of skepticism that we make progress. It is the artificiality of an age that makes us skeptical, makes us seek for something better. In the process we throw off much that is good along with much that is bad, but in the end we progress.

"Every Society has a Spiritual principle; is the embodiment of an Idea."[21] A good society endeavors sincerely to carry out this idea. "Society is the standing wonder of our existence; a true region of the Supernatural, a second all-embracing life, wherein our first individual life becomes doubly and trebly alive, and whatever of Infinitude was in us bodies itself forth and becomes visible and active."[22] We

20 Ibid., p. 219

21 Ibid., p. 197 22 Ibid., pp. 195-196

He says further that a good society must be made up of people who are sincere, who are trying to body forth the spirit that is in them, making it count for all in the society. Here we definitely find the influence of the transcendental philosophy, a philosophy that I have a great deal of sympathy for.

In "Signs of the Times"[23] in 1829 Carlyle began his study of the evils of the period. It is for the most part a long exposition on the dangers of the mechanistic theory. He begins the essay by a plea for action. "Our grand business undoubtedly is not to see what lies dimly at a distance but to do what lies clearly at hand."[24] Such a warning was timely, but like much good advice, it went unheeded. He says further on "Men have lost faith in individual endeavor and in natural force of any kind."[25] Once more he is hammering away at the importance of the individual over the machine. The sristocracy, in its search for happiness which has forced it to neglect those who look to it for guidance, has not learned the great truth that "our happiness depends on the mind which is within us, and not on the circumstances which are without us."[26] If we put our mind in harmony with the spirit that is within us, the outward circumstances will take care of themselves. But men have lost their faith in this invisible Spirit and worship mechanism. He ends the essay with this very important

23 T. Carlyle, Scottish and other Miscellanies, pp. 223-246

24 Ibid., p. 223

25 Ibid., pp. 228-229

26 Ibid., p. 232

statement. "To reform the world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects in himself."[27]

In "Chartism"[28] Carlyle again takes up the sword for the poor. In it he pleads for justice for every man; not merely justice in court and in wages but justice in the sense that each man is allowed to work and earn his own bread. The right to work is something that must be assured to all men in order to make each feel that he is a man. As long as there are men who cannot earn a living no matter how they struggle there will be this feeling of injustice which is dangerous to a healthy society. "The worker struggles for a manlike place and relation in the world where he sees himself a man."[29] This he must not be denied. The policy of "laissez-faire" has outworn its use. The working classes must be guided. They have not the intelligence to guide themselves but must be led. According to Carlyle this is the prayer that all men are asking at all times: "Give me a leader, a true leader, not a false sham leader; a true leader, that he may guide me on the true way, that I may be loyal to him, that I may swear fealty to him and follow him, and feel that it is well with me! The relation of the taught to the teacher, of the loyal subject to his guiding king, is, under one

27 Ibid., p. 245

28 T. Carlyle, English and Other Critical Essays, pp. 165-239

29 Ibid., p. 279

shape or another, the vital element of human Society; indispensable to it, perennial in it; without which, as a body reft of its soul, it falls down into death, and with horrid noisome dissolution passes away and disappears."[30]

Here is Carlyle's aristocratic principle in full flower. With conditions as they are today everywhere I think we could see the real enableness of this theory. No government, it seems to me, can succeed without leaders. We are coming more and more to realize that some men are meant to lead, others to follow. If those who are equipped to lead fail to do so, chaos results. I differ with Carlyle in his choice of those who are to lead. I will explain this more fully in my last chapter. Carlyle in this essay begins to show the influence of the Prussian theory that might rules right. He has two quotations of Professor Sauerteig which bear this out. One is "The strong thing was the just thing."[31] In accordance with his theory of hero-leader we have the following statement, "Obedience is the primary duty of man."[32] Here is his Scotch Calvinism cropping out. He closes the essay by suggesting two cures for the situation. One is universal education, the second is emigration.

In these essays on the critical conditions in England we see Carlyle as a prime doer in the effort to improve them. His humanitarianism is the ruling passion here. He is courageously striking out against his rulers. It is not the way

30 Ibid., p. 201

31 Ibid., p. 213 32 Ibid

to court recognition, but it is the way to live up to the highest that is within him, with all the sincerity and insight that he can muster.

There are three other essays worth noting briefly. They are "Boswell",[33] "Burns",[34] and "Sir Walter Scott".[35] All these men were heroes to a greater or lesser extent. Carlyle was at his best when painting portraits. He says of Boswell that he was"a cheering proof that loving wisdom is quite infinitely precious to man, is a symbol of the Godlike to him; that loyalty, discipleship, all that was ever meant by Hero-worship, lives perennially in the human bosom and waits to inspire all men with it, and again make the world alive."[36] Later on he says, "Amid those dull millions are scattered here and there superior natures. These latter examine and determine, not what others do, but what it is right to do. These are properly our Great Men; the guides of the dull host-which follows them as by an irrevocable decree."[37] This is further evidence of Carlyle's belief in the importance of hero-leaders.

In his essay on "Burns" he says, "No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet, and this is probably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain, that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, may perhaps

33 T. Carlyle, English and Other Critical Essays, pp.1-65
34 T. Carlyle, Scottish and Other Miscellanies, pp. 1-54
35 Ibid., pp. 54-112
36 Op. cit. p. 11 37 Ibid., p. 24

painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves."[38] I think there is some truth in what he says; a man must be able to see beyond the peculiar eccentricities of an individual into the spirit behind. If the spirit be worthy of admiration the eccentricities should be forgotten.

In "Sir Walter Scott" we again find this love of hero-worship. "Veneration of great men is perennial in the nature of man; this, in all times, especially in these, is one of the blessed facts predicable of him."[39] Later, "Understand it well, this of hero-worship was the primary creed, and has intrinsically been the secondary and ternary, and will be the ultimate and final creed of mankind; indestructible, changing in shape, but in essence unchangeable; whereon polities, religions, loyalties, and all highest human interests have been and can be built as on a rock that will endure while man endures."[40] I will close with this, "For surely it is the tesy of every divine man this same, and without it he is not divine or great-that he have fire in him to burn up somewhat of the sins of the world, of the miseries and errors of the worls; why else is he there?"[41]

Past and Present[42] is an elaboration of "Characteristics". It is divided into three parts. The first deals with the present conditions of England. The second part concerns

38 T. Carlyle, Scottish and Other Miscellanies, p. 2

39 Ibid., p. 55
40 Ibid., p. 56
41 Ibid., p. 112
42 Carlyle's Works, Centenary Edition, vol. 10

the history of monasticism in England. In it he shows the tendency towards hero-worship which was always prominent. The third part gives his suggestions or remedies. We need an aristocracy of talent but they are not gotten by election. They are sent to us and we must be of an heroic frame of mind in order to recognize them. "Democracy is the despair of finding any heroes to govern you."[43] Democracy does find leaders, but it does not intend to wait for the rather unsatisfactory plan of finding the heroes who are sent to it, but it attacks the problem much more realistically by attempting to educate the people to be leaders. Among the heroes Carlyle asks for are Captains of Industry. They are men who have combined action and far-sighted planning. They are what we might call enlightened capitalists who look out first for the interests of their employees.

The style of the book is similar to his essays. It is full of catch phrases and vivid pictures. Although there is much repetition in it, there is also elaboration and development that keep it from being tiresome. It is the acme of his attack upon the then existing social and industrial conditions.

In this chapter I have tried to introduce the reader to Thomas Carlyle. We have seen various examples of his idea of a hero and the need for heroes during his time. Carlyle is a crusader fighting to bring the world back to a belief in God and man.

43 Ibid., p. 215

Chapter II

This is to be concerned with Sartor Resartus or the Tailor Retailored. I said in the introduction that this work might be called his Credo. He sets forth his thoughts on almost every subject in a universal and startling way. At the time when he tried to sell it he was accused of being obscure. Undoubtedly this was true. A hasty reader might think that the author were slightly mad. It is full of delightful satire and warm sympathy and humor. The book concerns the life of Professor Teufelsdrockh and his clothes philosophy. It is divided into three books. The first introduces the clothes philosophy, giving it in its various aspects. The second book deals with the life of Professor Diogenes Teufelsdrockh. In this section there is much biographical data. The third book again expands the clothes philosophy.

Sartor Resartus specifically has little to do with the hero. It is an expansion of his philosophy of the world as it appears in clothes. The reason I shall summarize it is that it will give a good background for the rest of the thesis. We find here crystalized the ideas that we have seen in the essays in Chapter I. Without a discussion of Sartor Resartus we cannot really understand Carlyle. I hope the reader will not consider this chapter an aberration but a helpful explanation for what is to follow it.

The purpose of the book as Carlyle states in one of his last chapters is to show the wonder of daily life and common

things and to show that all things here in this physical world are but clothes which cover the spirit underneath, which is the true reality. Among other things Carlyle is trying to bring before the English German Romanticism. It has greatly influenced him as we have seen and he feels that England needs to understand it. By means of Herr Teufelsdrockh he has philosophized about the world and human nature and has set forth his own philosophical struggles and their solutions.

The first few chapters are spent in introducing the subject and the professor. We learn that he is a professor at Weissnichtwo, a professor of Things in General at the University there. He is pretty much of a lone wolf but he attends a certain coffee house with a select group of friends. He lives in a tower room which overlooks the city. In this chapter Carlyle gives a masterly description of a city. I wish I could quote all of it, but I will do my best to summarize it. It is a city of contrasts, of birth and death, cursing and praying. "The Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within damask curtains; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw; in obscure cellars, Rouge-et-Noir languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard hungry Villains; while Councillors of State sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are men."[1] There is the black and white of the thief and the lover, of the cells of the condemned and the dancing salon of the wealthy, of riot in dens of shame and the mother "with

1 T. Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, Phil.: Henry Altemus, 1894,p.25

streaming hair, kneeling over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten."[2] "All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them; weltering like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its head above the others; such work goes on under that smoke-counterpane! - but I, mein Werther, sit above it all; I am alone with the Stars."[3] These two pages are packed with human emotions stripped of their clothes. The stark contrasts are flung in one's face with nothing to soften them. The very soul of the city is laid bare before us. As I read the description it gave me a feeling of horror and at the same time one of excitement. It is one of Carlyle's most eloquent pleas for social reconstruction. It is far better than a series of dry prosy sermons on the subject. He has made the situation alive. People are the center of it as in all of Carlyle's writing.

We now get into the clothes philosophy. People first wore clothes for the sake of ornament to distinguish them as superior beings. In one place he asks why it is that when Red says to threadbare Blue, "Be Hanged", he obeys? It is because Red is dressed in the garb of a judge and hence has authority over him. This is an indication "that man is a spirit and bound by invisible bonds to all Men; that he wears clothes, which are the visible emblems of that fact."[4]

One of the titles in Book I is "The World Out of Clothes".

2 Ibid., p. 2

3 Ibid., p. 2

4 Ibid., p. 65

in it Carlyle sets forth more of the transcendental philosophy. This world is one of appearances, of symbols which are revelations of God. "Society is founded upon cloth."[5] Again we find the insistence that the whole is greater than the part. The professor suggests that we strip ourselves of all adventitious wrappings and look at ourselves naked. That is what we really are, not what our clothes make us. Here is an excellent example of Carlyle's satiric humor. "What would Majesty do, should the buttons all simultaneously start, and the solid wool evaporate, in very Deed, as here in Dream? Ach Gott! How each skulks into the nearest hiding-place; their high State Tragedy becomes a Pickle-herring-Farce to weep at, which is the worst kind of Farce; the tables and with them the whole fabric of Government, Legislation, Property, Police, and Civilized Society, are dissolved, in wails and howls."[6] When one reflects upon this one realizes the importance of a clothes philosophy.

The Professor further develops his clothes philosophy by saying that everything in this world **creates** clothes for itself. The mind and imagination invents the bodies through which they can express themselves. All in this world is a bodying forth of the spirit that is within it.

Book II deals with the life of Professor Teufelsdrockh. We shall note certain similarities to Carlyle's own life although I shall not deal with it in very great detail. Diogenes

5 Ibid., p. 56 6 Ibid., pp. 66-67

Teufelsdrockh was left by a stranger to an elderly couple in a village in Germany. Carlyle too was of humble origin. He was born in Ecclefechan in Scotland the son of a stone mason. Diogenes, like Thomas, had a happy childhood with simple but loving parents. Diogenes' opinion of the education he received at the university is that of Carlyle's. For the most part it was mere sham. He felt that it was information that he could have learned by himself just as easily. It was this dissatisfaction with the educational world that caused both Diogenes and Thomas to make their way alone. The love affair is also similar. Blumine was probably Margaret Gordon. Both young ladies made a more desirible match. After this we find a break between the two men. Thomas married Jane Welch, but Diogenes kept to the state of single blessedness.

After this love affair Diogenes goes through his period of unbelief. The unhappy love affair was the culminating point in the doubts he had come upon in college. He realized that if happiness is the only goal of mankind then man never attains his goal. His soul demands whether there is a God and if there is does He concern Himself with the universe He has created? Diogenes tries to escape his sorrow by travel but even there his misery follows him. This chapter is called the "Everlasting No". Diogenes then comes to the conclusion that he must turn from himself to the outside world for comfort. He decides a war going on and reaches a state of indifference. Carlyle too went through this period of doubt, of

soul-searching questions.

Diogenes goes through his period of temptation and foils the devil by working in well-doing. He eventually comes to the conclusion that there is something higher than happiness to be obtained. One finds blessedness in searching for the Godlike in man. Diogenes found the Everlastin Yea: "Love not pleasure; love God".[7] His motto is:"Do the Duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second duty will already have become clearer."[8] This too is Thomas' answer to the Everlasting No. In summarizing the life of Professor Teufelsdrockh Carlyle talks about historical facts for which the Herr Professor has no use. He says, "Wilt thou know a Man, above all a Mankind, by stringing together beadrolls of what thou namest Facts? The Man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did, but what he became."[9] History must be concerned with biography, not with dry facts.

Now that we are introduced to Professor Teufelsdrockh we come to more of the clothes philosophy in Book III. There is a very singular chapter called "Church Clothes". Here is expanded the interpretation of a Society which we found in his "Characteristics". Religion is the nervous system, the life-giving tissue of the society. Without it society is a mere sham. Church clothes are symbols of this religious society. They consist of the actual clothes, but far more important, of the Church organization with all its physical representatives of the Church spiritual. As long as the religious spirit re-

7 Ibid., p. 203 8 Ibid., p. 207 9 Ibid., p. 214

mains in them they are of use to the society. But when they become mere masks, as they had in Carlyle's time, they are a source of evil. Society must ever strive to keep the spirit aglow within the outer covering. There must always be sincerity at the basis of each man's actions; then the society will be sincere because it is each man who makes up the society.

The chapter on "Symbols" is another transcendental chapter. Everything in this world is a symbol of a spirit that we cannot see. The finite everywhere bodies forth the Infinite. Man works and lives by these symbols of the Infinite of which he is a part. According to Carlyle there are two kinds of symbols: extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic ones are those of outward show like flags, standards, the symbols used at a coronation. They lost their value more quickly than the intrinsic and become mere shells. It is this kind that we frequently have to throw off when they have outworn their service. Those of intrinsic value are works of art and lives of great men. These more closely express the spirit that created them. All great works of art are done with the life-blood of the person who created them. A great work of art has sincerity at its base. The creator saw into the spirit of which he was a part and brought it forth for others to see and heed. Works of art include music, painting, soulpture, and literature. All their creators are trying to be "in tune with the Infinite". The life of a great man is the noblest thing God ever created. If we are to understand

history, know our own times, we must become thoroughly acquainted with the lives of the great men in that period. This is the whole thesis of Carlyle's conception of history, and here, his conception of the meaning of the universe.

Carlyle again hits the contemporary society in his chapter, "Helotage". He says that the man to be admired is he who works for daily and spiritual bread. This eliminates the idle rich. The worst tragedy that can happen to a person is not that he is poor but that the light of his sould go out. When ignorance abounds then we have the most horrible condition society can produce.

"The Phoenix" continues this theme of the preceding chapter. Society is dead because it no longer has religion. The existing institutions which form its body are going. Chaos is undoubtedly prevailing but all is not hopeless. The symbols have become forms and man must seek again for new life which he can express with new symbols. In the midst of this chaotic condition man is working towards something that will be more enduring. This period of woe is bad, but it is inevitable and must be accepted. It is now the duty of man to bring on the new birth as quickly as possible. This period of history is the death-birth of the phoenix. It is a period full of discouragement and despair, but it is also one of hope. I think this symbol of the phoenix death-birth is excellent. It is vivid and concise and is a very accurate picture of the period. We are still in the throes of it now.

In a period of a hundred years the birth has not been accomplished, but there is still hope. We have progressed in that direction although not with the remedy Carlyle suggested. Nor have we progressed very far, but the matter of a death-birth does not permit of hasty action. Perhaps if we had realized sooner or if we will now realize the importance of good leaders we will amke more rapid progress. By good leaders I do not mean heroes that are set up as gods, but men whom we know to be wise and good, who will sincerely work for the welfare of all. They are not gods to be worshipped, but men to be obeyed intelligently, not blindly.

In "Organic Filaments" Carlyle reasserts the meaning of the phoenix death-birth. Man and the world is ever changing but all mankind, past and present and future,is one. We shall always have our kings because hero-worship is perennial in man although they may appear in different trappings. We will find our new religion in this rebirth of the belief in man. The organic filaments of this new religion are the newspapers and other literature. Carlyle says elsewhere that our churches are the newspapers and magazines, as well as the books, which have been made so easily available to all. They wield much more power than the minister in the pulpit. As we look around us now can we deny that Carlyle was right? With the war more men are turning back to the church, but even so the newspapers undoubtedly exercise more power. When the influence they have if for the good of mankind the new religion of Carlyle will become alive and vital.

There is one other chapter worth mentioning. It is the "Dandiacal Body". Like the description of the city it is full of stark, clean-cut contrasts. We see the Dandy absorbed in himself, his own pleasures, the aggrandizement of his social position. His gospel is embodied in the fashionable novels. There is a bitter castigation of the superficiality and selfishness of the Dandy who worships at night high priests and priestesses who are frequently changing. On the opposite side is the Irish Poor-Slave. They are worshippers of the Earth, working in her continuously. We have in direct contrast the description of a Poor-Slave household and a Dandiacal household.

10

Poor-Slave household

"The furniture of this Caravansera consisted of a large iron Pot, two oaken Tables, two Benches, two Chairs, and a Potheen Noggin. There was a loft above (attainable by a ladder), upon which the inmates slept; and the space below was divided by a hurdle into two Apartments; the one for their cow and pig, the other for themselves and guests. On entering the house we discovered the family, eleven in number, at dinner, the father sitting at the top, the mother at the bottom, the children on each side, of a large oaken Board, which was scooped out in the middle like a trough, to receive the contents of their Pot of Potatoes. Little holes were cut at equal distances to contain Salt; and a bowl of Milk stood on the table: all the luxuries of meat and beer, bread, knives, and dishes were dispensed with."

11

Dandiacal Household

"A dressing-room splendidly furnished; violet-colored curtains, chairs and ottomans of the same hue. Two full-length Mirrors are placed, one on each side of a table, which supports the luxuries of the Toilet. Several Bottles of Perfumes, arranged in a peculiar fashion, stand upon a smaller table of mother-of-pearl: opposite to these are placed the accurtenances of Lavation richly wrought in frosted silver. A Wardrobe of Buhl is on the left; the doors of which, being partly open, discover a profusion of Clothes; shoes of a singularly

10 Ibid., pp. 297-298 11 Ibid., p. 298

small size monopolise the lower shelves. Fronting the wardrobe a door ajar gives some slight glimpse of a Bathroom." Carlyle was afraid that these two classes would absorb all those in between into one or the other. With England arrayed in two such extreme camps who could tell what would happen? Would it ever be possible to reconcile those two rooms? Could they ever be made to understand each other? These bare outlines are sufficient for the intelligent reader to fill in the background. It is a brief but punching hit that reaches its mark quickly and acutely.

In Sartor Resartus we have some of Carlyle's most vivid satirical description. His humanitarianism has increased and become more vital. He is continuing the direct aim begun in some of the earlier essays such as "Signs of the Times" and "Characteristics" against those whom he thought responsible for the misery of this age. His Transcendental-Calvinistic philosophy of which we had examples in the essays we have discussed in Chapter I has been expanded and carefully restated. By now we find Carlyle a mature man with his philosophy of action and belief which remains steadfast in the rest of his works. Experience modifies and expands this philosophy but its foundation is firmly established. He has decided to make literature his life work although recognition has not come. This is the medium in which he will work to improve the unbelieving world and make it once more sincere, a true spirit behind its symbols.

In the next chapter on Heroes and Hero-Worship we shall see this hero ideal expanding. It is becoming more and more the essence of his belief, it is remedy for the sick world.

Chapter III

Heroes and Hero-Worship was a series of lectures given by Carlyle in 1840. It has not the depth we find in Sartor Resartus. He listed six kinds of heroes. Man in his primitive stage worshipped the hero as divinity. As civilization progressed the hero became a Prophet. Next we have the Poet, then the Priest, the Man of Letters, and the King.

The hero as we first find him was a divinity. Carlyle uses Odin to illustrate this aspect. He begins the lecture by the assertion that the universal history is the history of the great men in it. Great men are always profitable company. "Heroism is a divine relation which in all times unites a Great Man to other men."[1] A man's religion is of chief importance when we consider what he is; not the religion he professes but the religion he acts in accordance with, what he knows to be his relation to the universe and his duty here. We have here the basis of our hero. He must first of all be a man of religion who has found his place in the universe and strives as best he can in it. We should also judge a nation on the basis of its religion, whether it is Heathenism, Christianism, Skepticism.

In discussing Paganism Carlyle questions how it came to be. Many have accused Paganism of being mere quackery. "But

1 Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, New York: The Henneberry Co., p. 5

no, we shall understand paganism when we first admit that to its followers it was, at one time, earnestly true."[2] It was an allegory, a symbol, but the spirit behind this was real. They worshipped nature, something that Carlyle thinks it would do us no harm to do. By worship Carlyle means "A transcendent wonder; wonder for which there is now no limit or measure; that is worship."[3] The pagan man saw the universe as a world of miracles and worshipped it as such. His gods were gods of the universe, of fire, water, the stars. Since then man has concentrated these many gods into one God or the universe. This is the beginning of his progress. With the pagans these earth and fire gods took on the form of a man, a great man. In this way the worship could become more concrete, could have more meaning. "Worship of a Hero is transcendent admiration of a Great Man. No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man."[4] According to this theory, he is the most divine creature God has made and is most worthy of worship and obedience.

Another form of hero worship is loyalty, faith in another individual. Society with its king down to its lowliest peasant is based on a graduated hero worship. We cannot escape it, no matter how hard we try. Carlyle says that it is the great men of valor who save any age. This is true, but is it not also true that in many of the periods the circumstances made the great men? If the time was not ready for them they could not

2 Ibid., p. 2
3 Ibid., p. 19
4 Ibid., p. 17

become great. I am thinking specifically of Roger Williams whose conception of democracy has not been realized yet. He was a man far in advance of his times; his age was not ready to receive him and acknowledge him as their great man. There are other examples of this but he is the only one I shall mention.

For Carlyle this fact of perennial hero worship is the one hope of the salvation of the world. It is the point below which man can never go. It is the universal characteristic that can be appealed to when all else fails. When we glance at history we can see ~~this~~ one truth of this. When anarchy and revolution became desperate we find a hero sent to be acclaimed by the people. In Russia we find Lenin, Stalin; in France there was Napoleon; in the United States, Washington, Lincoln; in Germany, Bismarck, Hitler. Some of these heroes are truly heroic, some are not, but at the time when they held power the people thought they were heroes, and that is what made them so for that age. In later ages they take their rightful places as heroes or villains.

We now come to a summary of Norse mythology. Like many Pagan tribes they worship difierent aspects of nature as gods with human characteristics as well as divine. Unfavorable aspects of nature such as frost or the sea-tempest are called Jotuns or Giants. The gods, like Odin and Thor, were continually fighting with these Jotuns. The Norse paganism lacks the gracefulness of the Greek paganism, but Carlyle

chose it because it had a rude strength and sincerity which make it noble and genuine. This sincerity, as we shall see in the later lectures, is the basis of all hero-worship. This rude, giantlike greatness later becomes tamed into the godlike greatness of Shakespeare and Dante. Another truth which the Norsemen discovered was that all of life was a tree. They called this tree Igdrasil. They, in their rude minds, were able to see that all which had gone before was the root and trunk from which they were an offshoot. For them the tree was the whole of which they were a part. Each age has its thinker, its spiritual hero who embodies and makes concrete these feelings and convictions of the people. Odin was the spiritual hero of the Norsemen.

What made Odin a divinity? He was undoubtedly a man who grew into a divinity through the traditions that were handed down about him after his death. He must of course have been a brave and valorous fighter because no man could exist in those times without being one. But he was also a poet, a prophet, says Carlyle. He was able to gather into his own life and deeds all that the Norse pagans held most dear. Like the poet and prophet he spoke from the very soul of his age. "His way of thought became their way of thought:-such, under new conditions, is the history of every great thinker still."[5] Odin was brave. Man today must first of all be brave. He must subdue fear that is within him before he can conquer himself and aid the world he lives in. It is not the crude phy-

5 Ibid., p. 42

sical bravery man needs now, but the far stronger spiritual bravery. Mankind is always surrounded by fear which he must break through with the truth. Odin, as well as being physically brave, must have undoubtedly been this. "This valor is the source of all pity, of truth and all that is great and good in man."[6] Valor which has overcome fear can understand and pity this same fear that is in others. This same fear has been conquered by the truth when the hero had the valor to seek for the truth in the darkness that surrounded him.

This world of gods with its valor and sincerity gave way, phoenix-like, to a higher conception of one God, a God of justice. This is embodied in the hero as prophet. Polytheism has given away to monism.

The prophet Carlyle has chosen is Mahomet. Carlyle says of his choice that he is not the most eminent or truest prophet, but he is a true one. Mahomet too was sincere; this is his first requisite of a hero. "No man adequate to do anything, but is first of all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic."[7] This sincerity is shown in his acknowledgment of the greatness and wonder of existence. What he says, what he feels are directly from his own experience in trying to understand this universe. He must always be in contact with the inner meaning of things, with the true spirit of the world.

6 Ibid., pp. 50-51 7 Ibid., p. 64

In defense of his choice of Mahomet Carlyle points out that we must not cast aside a man as not a hero because he fails in some measure. The very fact that he is a human being means that he will fail. He is a hero if he picks himself up and struggles onward, if he does not let his circumstances overcome him.

Mahomet was "a spontaneous, passionate, yet just, true-meaning man! Full of wild faculty, fire and light; of wild worth, all uncultured; working out his life-task in the depths of the Deserts there."[8] He was always aware of the great fact of existence and was accustomed to retire yearly for one month to meditate. There, even more than in his daily life, he tried to see through the shows of things to the things themselves, to see the spirit through the clothes that cover it. In these meditations he came to feel that behind the world was a just law and that the soul of thw world was good. His duty was to obey the law of the whole universe, following unquestioningly and obediently. This, says Carlyle, is the only true morality known. This Islam that Mahomet taught means self-denial. "This is yet the highest Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth."[9]

Mahomet had trouble to gain followers as did Christ, to whom he is sometimes compared. He was hunted from place to place, but still he preached his doctrines. He dictated his Koran. Carlyle says of it that it is a crude book, very un-

8 Ibid., p. 76 9 Ibid., p. 81

interesting to read, but it was sincere. There is much at fault in it, especially the sensuousness. However, the worst aspects of this sensuality were given after Mahomet's death. Carlyle attempts to excuse it by saying, "Enjoying things which are pleasant; that is not evil: it is the reducing of our moral self to slavery by them that is. Let a man assert withal that he is king over his habitudes; that he could and would shake them off, on cause shown: this is an excellent law."[10] Whether or not we object to his excusing Mahomet can we deny the reason in this statement?

The hero has developed from divinity to prophet. He has in both aspects sought to understand the whole of which he is a part and find his duty in making his spirit express the spirit of the whole.

Both Odin and Mahomet had poetry in them. They saw the melody of the world and tried to put their spirits in harmony with it. All great men in this sense are poets. But here we shall talk of two men who were given poetic speech as well as a poetic soul. These men are Dante and Shakespeare. One distinction we have made today between prophet and poet is that the prophet emphasizes the moral aspect of nature, the poet the beautiful. In the strictest sense we cannot have one without the other. That is why our great man must be both a prophet and a poet.

Dante was a man of sorrow. Sorrow did for him what it

10 Ibid., p. 106

should do for all people; it made him tender and soft at heart although it also gave him a stern exterior. He was driven from Florence with a price upon his head. It was in this exile that he wrote his Song which is also judged by its sincerity. He is a man full of pity which he had learned from the rigor of his life. Carlyle says of him, "For vigor, earnestness and depth, he is not to be paralleled in the modern world; to seek his parallel we must go into the Hebrew Bible, and live with the antique Prophets there."[11] His Inferno was an expression of the miseries he had been through. His Purgatorio and Paradiso show the hope and belief that he had come to after his misery. Dante emphasized the moral law in his work; he points out the duty of man. This is great progress from the pagan belief which merely dealt with the operations of nature. Dante was the spokesman of the Middle Ages, speaking of the inner life. Shakespeare was the spokesman of the outer life of Europe. He dealt with man's spirit, but as it appeared in its outward actions, not as it was in heaven or hell.

His greatness lies in his close touch with the world around him. He was dealing with the spirit as it appeared dressed in clothes. He never lost sight of the spirit but it is always clothed in human emotions and actions. Shakespeare was master of himself and his materials. He was above all a portrait painter. He sees and sets before us the magnificence and nobility of great people like Hamlet, Prospero; the hu-

11 Ibid., p. 134

mor of Falstaff; the beauty of Rosalind; the pathos of Desdemona; the villainy of Iago; the pitifulness as well as the majesty of Lear. It is through people that Shakespeare finds the spirit he must make manifest. He has set before us truths of human character that are eternal. This is his greatness. He, too, was a man of deep sincerity who had conquered fear and looked into the things themselves, finding there the message he was to give the world.

Here is the hero as priest. "He presides over the worship of the people; is the Uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the spiritual Captain of the people; as the Prophet is their spiritual King with many captains."[12] It is his duty to fight, to try and reform the world. The poet reformed the world quietly through his song. But the world also needs priests who will battle for the right, such men as Luther and Knox.

The world needs priests to reform it because it has become insincere. The Catholicism of Dante had outworn itself. The forms had become just forms, the spirit had gone out of them. It was necessary for a sincere man to be sent to shake off this evil cloak. That man was Luther. We find the phoenix-death-birth again here. Catholicism and Protestantism are struggling with each other. Men were struggling to be sincere and this they could not be unless they threw off the outworn bonds of Catholicism which prevented freedom of thought.

12 Ibid., p. 132

In the middle of this lecture Carlyle makes a very interesting statement: "I see the blessedest result preparing itself: Not abolition of hero worship, but rather what I would call a whole world of heroes. If here and there a sincere man, why may not every one of us be a hero?"[13] Is not this Carlyle's hope for the world? It is the goal which all of us should work for.

Luther did not start as a rebellious priest. But the more he saw the sham of popery the more he was forced to cast it aside if he was to be a sincere man. The story that had its climax in Wittenberg is familiar to all readers of history. He proved true to his convictions and began the Reformation of which this world we live in is a product. It was the breaking away from medievalism to modernism, the casting aside of worn-out clothes. Since Luther's time we have had to cast away more out-worn clothes and there are yet many to be cast away. In one sense we are still struggling in this phoenix death-birth. When the birth will be accomplished we cannot say, let us hope it will be soon.

Knox also saw the power of the Reformation. He did for Scotland what Luther did for all of Europe. He was a sincere and valorous fighter against the quackery that had come in his time. He has neither the stature nor the scope of Luther, but in his own way he was a hero.

In the lecture on the hero as a man of letters there is

13 Ibid., p. 179

much that we have already found in Carlyle's earlier works. He is the modern hero. How the world receives him is significant of the general character of the world at that time. It is the man of letters who tells the world for all time what he has discovered when he has sought and found the Divine fact. He too is seeking with all his heart for the true relation between his spirit and that of the world-spirit. The man of letters has in our day become the priest. His newspapers, pamphlets, books form the church of the modern world. It is he who reaches the greatest number of people, if not in the period in which he lives, then after his death. This man of letters combines the prophet, the poet, the priest. He is the culmination of all the heroes that have gone before. This doctrine we have heard before so I shall say no more about it. He also takes occasion to condemn the skepticism of the age which we have heard him say before is the cause of the evils of his time.

Samuel Johnson is the first man of letters of the eighteenth century he takes up. "He was a prophet to his people; preached a Gospel to them,-as all like him always do. The highest Gospel he preached we may describe as a kind of Moral Prudence: In a world where much is to be done, and little is to be known, see how you will do it!"[14] He is struggling to live by the truth as he sees it. This is the main reason that Carlyle gives for his greatness. He was a strong man who overcame his physical weakness.

14 Ibid., p. 255

Rousseau was not a strong man, as was Johnson, says Carlyle. But he had one mark of the hero, that he was in earnest. He did not conquer himself as must a true hero, but in his search for the meaning of life he did discover truth. The doctrines of social contract played their part in the French Revolution. They saw through the sham of the French monarchy at that time and tried to cast away the worn-out symbols.

The last of the men of letters is Burns. He was able in the midst of his poverty to see the spirit behind the world. His soul was full of wonder which is the essence of a hero, wonder at the miracles of nature. He, more than the other two, had the soul of a hero. He was in earnest and he was valorous . He had conquered himself in his lowly surroundings. Later he lost control of himself. But, as Carlyle says, it is the exceptional man who can receive flattery all at once and not have his head turned. He has his weakness but he was nevertheless a hero.

I think that Carlyle's choice of these three men for heroes was not the best he could have made. They all live up to the main qualification that a hero be earnest, but the author is forced to make excuses for all of them. We must remember that the eighteenth century was an age of skepticism and incapable of hero-worship. This is the reason why the heroes do not appear so great to us. Part of this reasoning of Carlyle is true, but they are still heroes with weaknesses.

in spite of the lack of hero-worship in the time they wrote. Perhaps he intended to have this the case. If we can see the weaknesses as well as the strong points of our hero we will be more willing to follow him, and less likely to follow him blindly. However, Carlyle seems to favor blind hero-worship in other places so I doubt if this is true. If he is setting up heroes to be worshipped it seems to me that these heroes should have as few human weaknesses as possible. There are other men in literature who are greater than these. Carlyle was of course trying to choose men fairly near his own time. Perhaps these were the best he could find, but if this were the case I think I should eliminate all but Burns as approaching a hero. The main purpose of this lecture was to show the importance of the men of letters. The rest of the nineteenth century produced men of letters more fit to be called heroes than these three. Carlyle was indicating the trend that great men would follow in the future. If we remember this the lecture will perhaps have more meaning for us.

Carlyle says of the king, his sixth hero, "The commander of men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of great men. He is practically the summary for us of all the various figures of Heroism; priest, teacher, whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in man, embodies

itself here, to command over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to do.'[13]

The king is not king by divine right. He must be sought out. Each society must find its Ablest Man and invest him with authority. Carlyle does not mean literally that he is a king. But he must be treated as one once he is found. He must be obeyed and followed blindly after he has once been chosen. When the unable man is put at the head revolution follows. The French Revolution is an example of this. The mission of the hero-king is to bring order. Napoleon did this for the French Revolution.

Cromwell is the first hero king of Carlyle. It was he who brought order to the Puritan revolt. The Puritans saw the sham of the Stuarts. Their government was no longer sincere and must be thrown off. Even Charles I had to go. They were seeking for the right to express the spirit that was within them. They could not become a part of the whole under the Stuart despotism. Cromwell was the ablest man they could find for their king and he was a wise choice. He kept in mind that he was working for all the people. He was helping them to find the true reality in their government. It was he who kept it from turning into a French Revolution. The Puritans found their leader and followed him blindly. When they began to question, then he was forced to become despotic.

13 Ibid., p. 274

But throughout his life he remained sincere and true to the cause. It was after his death that the Commonwealth disintegrated. It had lost the strong arm of its leader and men forgot the reality they were seeking for and turned to selfish gain. Cromwell had the magnitude of a great leader and he lived up to this magnitude.

Napoleon is the other king mentioned. As long as he worked for the people he was successful. He in his way was as great as Cromwell. But he made the mistake of being absorbed by the outer coverings of what he had been seeking. Fame turned his head; he wanted to become dictator. Cromwell did not right for himself alone, Napoleon unfortunately did. The people recognized the sham of the leader they had chosen and he was finally cast off, but not until he had done much damage. Perhaps if Cromwell had not died when he did he would have become like Napoleon.

We have traced the hero as he was in the earliest times down to the present. Each succeeding hero was an embodiment of the heroes that had gone before. They were all seeking to find the meaning of the universe and were in some measure successful. They were all men who realized that this is a spiritual world covered with all sorts of clothing. It was a man's duty to see beyond this clothing to the reality that is underneath. In my final chapter I will say more about what I think of his choice of heroes.

Chapter IV

The French Revolution was a marvelous subject for Carlyle to write about. It abounded in people and the effects of their emotions [illegible] on the situation. It was a subject in which he could let himself go and this he did.

Before I read it I was puzzled about how he would deal with the subject. Then I began it I realized it was the only kind of history Carlyle could write. It is really a first-rate melodrama rather than a history. The facts are confused and even obscured by the emotional content although basically they are correct. The only system of arrangement that is apparent is the chronological one. This is not enough to make a unified history. There must be a planned interrelation of character and details which is not evident in The French Revolution.

For a student already familiar with the details of the French Revolution it is a very interesting history-drama; for a beginner it is a confused jumble of personalities. I found the summary of the events from 1789-1795 at the end of the book essential to understanding it. From this standpoint the book is not a good history. Good writing should not confuse the reader. It is written in the style of Sartor Resartus which was influenced by Laurence Sterne. The style is delightful in a work like Sartor Resartus which is largely philosophical in nature and allows a leisurely and flexible style.

But history by its very nature must show an orderly plan. It is not a subject in which the emotions should have the upper hand.

Carlyle has said that history is made up of innumerable biographies. The French Revolution develops this hypothesis. It is the biography of the masses as well as of the leaders. Carlyle believed that in order to understand an age you must understand the lives of the people in it, especially of the great men of the age. The French Revolution was an excellent medium for expressing this belief. Almost more than in any other period in history, it is the people who rose to importance. Emotions ruled the day. Carlyle, as we have seen, was a romanticist, not a classicist, in his thinking and writing. The French Revolution gave him a chance to revel in his romantic emotionalism.

Perhaps I am being unfair to Carlyle when I emphasize his emotional aspect, but that is the side that is most prominent. The French Revolution is a fine piece of scholarship. Carlyle shows intimate knowledge of the events of the period. If he did not have the facts so well in hand he could not interpret them in the light of the people who lived then, as he does. If the reader penetrates beneath the surface he will find that the melodrama is based on a solid foundation of facts. Carlyle is trying to get away from Dryasdust whose history is as one-sided as is Carlyle's. A happy medium between the two would be my ideal history.

He understands very well the conditions that brought on the French Revolution. The monarchy was decadent, the economic conditions desperate. Writers and pamphleteers, influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Paine, spread the fire. All this background is given as a series of tense scenes flashed before us in rapid succession. They take one's breath away. We suffer with those starving millions and cry for "Bread!" Carlyle's emotionalism and humanitarianism enables us to feel all the pangs that they feel. We are Jean, Michel, Marie whose stomachs are nourished on bread baked of flour mixed with plaster-of-paris, with more plaster-of-paris added as the famine continued. Our thoughts penetrate no farther into the situation than this sensuous but very excusable desire for bread. We will follow anyone and do anything as long as bread is the promised reward. But we must have bread! This ability to transport the reader to Paris in 1789 and the years following is Carlyle's supreme gift in the field of history. Without it history cannot be properly understood. But as I read these tragic flashes I almost forgot that they were history, that there were some plain facts on which to harnesss these emotions. In this respect Dryasdust is superior. He lets us know the progress that the mob is making. Neither one gives a complete picture of the situation; the two together approach this goal.

This super-enthusiasm of Carlyle is perfect for such scenes as the storming of the Bastille and the insurrection

of women at Versennes. Bastille day was unforgettable for those who participated and the reader of Carlyle is as much a part of the mob as though he had been there. He too hoarsens his lungs and throat with yelling and tears away at anything he can lay his hands on. One of the best sections of the Bastille scene is the terror of the old man who had charge of the Bastille. Although Carlyle is sympathetic with the French people, he makes us feel the shrinking terror of the old man who hides in the innermost part of the Bastille. He is found even there and dragged up to the turrets. There he is forced to look over the terrifying edge and he is told that if he does not do as he is ordered it would be a very easy thing to give him a push. The old man's knees shake and he promises to be "good", but even so he is later killed. The reader's heart is stirred with pity for the poor old man who is a victim of the society he has served so long.

Another scene I mentioned was the insurrection of the women at Versennes. This also is a thrilling episode. The women surge to the palace to beg bread of the king. They break past the guards and gain entrance to the private chambers. One of the most attractive coquettes is sent in to plead with Louis. On her return she tells them that Louis kissed her hand! The general cry "Vive le roi!" arose, bread forgotten. Even then majesty could overawe them. They departed with their purpose unaccomplished, but for the moment realizing it.

As the mob became more and more uncontrolled, leadership passing from Mirabeau to Danton, then to Robespierre, we come to another startling episode in this crazy-quilt drama. This is the story of Charlotte Corday, one of the most radical Girondists. She called on Citoyen Marat with the excuse that she would give him certain information that would enable him to help France. She was admitted to a room with a stool for writing, a chair, a slipper bath, and a squalid washerwoman to care for him in his illness. Charlotte introduced herself as she entered.

"Citoyen Marat, I am from Caen, the seat of rebellion, and wished to speak with you. Be seated, mon enfant, Now what are the traitors doing at Caen? What deputies are at Caen?-Charlotte names some. 'Their heads shall fall within a fortnight', croaks the eager people's friend, clutching his tablets to write: Barbaroux, Petion writes he with bare shrunk arm, turning aside in the bath; Petion and Louvet, and - Charlotte has drawn the knife from the sheath; plunges it with one sure stroke, into the writer's heart. 'A moi, chere ami. Holy dear!' no more could the death-choked say or shriek. The helpful washerwoman running in, there is no friend of the people or friend of the washerwoman left; but his life with a groan rushes out, indignent, to the shades below."[1]

How much more effective than saying that Charlotte Corday, under false pretenses, gained admittance to marat and stabbed him through the heart, a description which we would be likely

1 The FrenchRevolution , Centenary edition, vol. III p.

to find in Dryasdust.

So far I have dealt with the common people, the mob. But a history by Carlyle would not be complete without a hero-leader and we find several of these. Mirabeau is the first one and the best one according to Carlyle. He saw the sham of the French monarchy and realized that an uprising of the people was the only way to overthrow it. Like all of Carlyle's heroes he saw through the shows of things into the thing itself. He saw the outworn clothes of the French monarchy which must be cast off before the true spirit could be made manifest. But Mirabeau also saw the danger in such an uprising. He knew that it was difficult to control an aroused mob. He also realized that although a mob uprising was necessary to overthrow Louis that this same mob could not govern itself. It must depend on strong leaders. As long as he live Mirabeau was able to keep the mob from the excess of the September massacres. He was a powerful personality who forced the people by his own strength to practice some restraint. Mirabeau had no use for Robespierre and the rising Jacobins who were reveling in their freedom, forgetting what they were fighting for. He advocated the middle course that was so important for a sane revolt and he had, what was more essential, the power to enforce his views. Carlyle says that if he had lived the course of the French Revolution might have been quite different. I think probably there is a great deal of truth in this idea. When he died what was there of calmness and restraint was gone.

Danton was his successor. He was a Girondist until they became too radical. The radical element under Robespierre later guillotined him. Danton was a hero in his day, according to Carlyle. He also saw the shambles and went about tearing it away. But he did not let his emotions obscure the truth. The people must not go to excess. He was against the assassination of the king. Remove him from power, but don't murder him was his teaching. But Danton did not have the control over the people that Mirabeau had had. The mob became more and more Jacobin in sentiment. They did not like the restraint preached by Danton; so "away with him, to the guillotine!"

Both of these men saw the truth that the mob must have wise leaders, that they were not educated to govern themselves wisely. Danton lost his life in a horrible way because he preached this truth. Both he and Mirabeau were men of courage and loyalty, loyal to the truth as they found it, seeing into the spirit behind the shambles of the French monarchy.

Robespierre took over after Danton's murder. He was a thoroughgoing Jacobin. It was under him that Louis and Marie Antoinette lost their heads. The September massacres came under his leadership. He and his party brought La Guillotine more business than anyone and it was she who turned traitor and cut off his head. He was a man who rejoiced in excess, who let his emotions hide the truth

from him. He was not able to see where his uncontrolled emotions were leading him. He was able to discard the worn-out clothes of the monarchy, but he was not able to see the falseness of the Jacobins. Carlyle has no good thing to say about Robespierre and labels him "sea-green".

Carlyle has carried out his definition of the hero and of history very well in the French Revolution. He has made it a series of innumerable biographies. The whole history is written from the standpoint of the people in it. This naturally makes a drama which Carlyle's enthusiasm develops into a kaleidoscopic melodrama. We saw how the great man was first recognized and acclaimed by the people and then later how he was denied by them and put to death. These heroes were heroes because they sought the truth in the live spirit behind the world, not in the clothes that formed the outer covering. Robespierre made the mistake of being carried away by the shows of things.

Carlyle's transcendentalism, which is the basis of his philosophy, enabled him to give this interpretation of the decadent French monarchy. His humanitarianism gave him insight into the sufferings of the French people. This, coupled with his romanticism helped him to set it forth with the startling dramatic force that makes it alive.

As I indicated at the beginning of the chapter, I do not call it a good history; it is too enthusiastic. The reader's first impression is one of exaggeration and of artificial

emotionalism. This outer covering hides a fine piece of scholarship which should be more easily apparent to the reader. After one becomes used to the breath-taking pace and character of the history the emotional element gradually takes its place and the historical element becomes more noticeable. For this subject this enthusiasm and understanding is essential, but I would advise a beginner to become acquainted with Dryasdust before attempting this. It is an excellent reference book written with Carlyle's sympathy and humor that makes it enjoyable if taken in small doses.

Chapter V

Frederick the Great is Carlyle's last great work. It took him fourteen years to write it. It is a much calmer work than the French Revolution and hence a better history in my estimation. It consists of eight volumes which are a monument to Carlyle's scholarship.

It, like the French Revolution, is the type of history one would expect Carlyle to write, but in it we see a maturer, calmer Carlyle. His super-enthusiasm has abated and left his sympathy and humanitarianism. In it is all of Carlyle's humor and his "innumerable biographies". It is a work that should be read at a leisurely pace to be enjoyed. The reader does not have to take it in small doses as is better in the case of the French Revolution, but he should read it slowly seeking the humor and the human interest element.

Frederick is a much less confusing work. Besides the chronological sequence there is the life of Frederick to give it unity and order. The reader is not shoved back and forth and around among different personalities as he is in the French Revolution. There are many different people in Frederick but they appear and reappear in a more orderly fashion. Friedrich is the central figure to whom they are all directly or indirectly related. The work is so detailed that in this respect it is confusing, but even here there is more system than emotion.

The book is divided into eight volumes. The first is concerned with the history of Prussia from the tenth century to the time of Friedrich Wilhelm, our Friedrich's father. Volume II deals with the Double Marriage project between England and Prussia. This could be dismissed in two pages or less but Carlyle gives all the intricacies of the project with its various appearances. We come to know all the people concerned in it and their attitude towards or against it. Carlyle lives up to his plan of showing history from the standpoint of the people concerned, a viewpoint that is very fine. Almost as secondary material in this volume we see Friedrich growing up under the stern tutelage of his tyrannical father. He is subject to rigorous and sometimes cruel drill, against which his sensitive nature rebelled. But this same drill stood him in good stead later on. One of the most interesting features of the book are excerpts from Wilhelmine's diary. She is Friedrich's older sister and they are very close to each other during both their lives. She gives us many intimate, personal touches that are lacking in most histories. Carlyle puts as many of these anecdotes in his history as he can find and they make an otherwise dull history delightful reading. In Volume III Friedrich grows up. He goes through temptations which most young men must meet and he does not always resist them as he should. His father died and he took over the kingship. Upon the death of the Kaiser Friedrich planned to seize Silesia. Volume IV deals with the first Silesian War and general European

one. Volume V is concerned with the Second Silesian War and the ten years of peace following it. Volume VI tells of the Seven Years' War or the Third Silesian War which is full of reverses for Friedrich. Volume VII continues and finally ends the Seven Years' War with not much gained on either side. Volume VIII gives the last years of his life, in which Friedrich worked for certain reforms in law and agriculture. This is briefly the division of Friedrich. All the later volumes, which are full of minute descriptions of battles, have interspersed many interesting anecdotes about the people involved. We find biographies of people such as Voltaire and Maria Theresa as well as many others. It is these stories that make of Frederick a living history. As in the French Revolution, the reader becomes a member of the Court of Frederick, a soldier on the battlefield. Carlyle never loses sight of the fact that he is dealing with people, even in his circumstantial accounts of the various battles. It is certainly a severe test of his ability to escape Dryasdust and his method, a test which he passes with high honors.

In such a lengthy history there is a great deal of detail but it is very interesting because it is generally of a personal nature and Carlyle has rightly said that man is the most interesting subject to man. There are many excerpts from letters between Wilhelmine and Friedrich which show the close relationship between brother and sister. I think he cared more for her than he did any other human being. There are

other letters from Friedrich to his generals, his friends, Voltaire among them. The variety and number of anecdotes shows that Carlyle has done a find piece of research. He must have covered every document available on the reign of Friedrich in order to have given so many intimate sketches. For a person who wants a hasty survey of Friedrich's reign these details would become irksome, but to a careful student they add a great deal of interest and help to vivify the whole period. To be sure, there are many battle scenes that are told in a much too lengthy manner, but the reader is willing to forgive Carlyle for this because it is the same thoroughness and sympathy that gives us the fascinating letters and stories. When Carlyle wrote the history he must have determined to leave out nothing of importance and interest to the reader and in his attempt to carry this out he included much that must seem insignificant.

Carlyle had firmly in mind his hero when he wrote this history. Friedrich is not perfect, but he has the earmarks of a great man. Carlyle says that Voltaire was the great thinker of the eighteenth century, Frederick was the great doer. Although we have seen Carlyle's emphasis on action before it has become more marked by this time. Here there is more emphasis on the king, the doer, rather than the prophet, priest, poet, man of letters who are the thinkers. Like all of Carlyle's heroes he saw through the shambles of his time, at least the religious shambles of Catholicism. He did not

see the outworn political and economic institutions of his time. It seems to me that this emphasis on Friedrich's religious nature is overdone. From the evidence Carlyle presents I do not reach this conclusion. Friedrich is a Protestant and a sincere one, but unlike Luther, he does not denounce Catholicism or preach Protestantism. He was sincere, but it was not an active sincerity. In some instances his actions deny his religion. His severity toward his army is at times too strong. He fall quite easily into youthful follies which he might have withstood if his religion had been more real to him. From my own interpretation of the facts I would say that Friedrich does not live up to Carlyle's definition of a hero. Carlyle forces Friedrich into this mould and it does not fit him.

Friedrich was undoubtedly a fine general; his armies were the best disciplined in all Europe; but this is not the measure of a great man. Nor do his peace reforms which were of much benefit to his country make him great. He did realize that one duty of a king was to look out for the interests of his people. I think that Friedrich sincerely thought that his plans to acquire Silesia were a benefit to his people; it was not just for himself that he was being aggressive. In this sense he was a great man.

But those of us who are living today find it even harder to approve of Friedrich's aggressive policy. Such words as aggressor are in bad repute. As the reader examines the facts

he can't deny that Frederick was an aggressor, a dictator. We feel a sympathy for the people in Silesia and an abhorrence of Friedrich's surprise attacks which Carlyle admires. That is because such examples are so close to us today. We see the damage such aggression can do, damage which Carlyle fails to see. I don't think Friedrich was an earlier edition of Hitler. Friedrich did not fight solely for his own benefit. Hitler was sincerely trying to help his people when he began but he has since turned it to his own benefit as did Napoleon. Carlyle seems to feel that Friedrich's military ability made his wars right. In his enthusiasm for a hero-leader he forgot the people who were sacrificed for him. He has undoubtedly turned to a belief that might makes right. The leaders must have absolute power; the people's guarantee is that their leaders are religious men. Friedrich had the ability to enforce his rule and because he could he was a great man. Carlyle felt compelled to make a hero of Friedrich, and this biased his interpretations. It is still an excellent history because Carlyle presents the facts as they are, although his interpretation is distorted.

T This book, more than any other of his, shows up the weakness of Carlyle's hero-theory. His definition of a hero was so vague that he could force Friedrich into the mould. He says that a hero is a man who seeks the truth. But what is the truth Friedrich is seeking? Carlyle does not tell us. He says that a hero tries to make his spirit in accord with

the spirit of the universe. But what is the spirit of the universe. That is subject to each person's interpretation. It has some meaning for me but I cannot make it specific. He also says that the hero sees through the shows of things into the things themselves. But he does not tell us how we should know the thing in itself when we come to it. We cannot prove or disprove that Friedrich was always seeking the truth; it is a too subjective matter. From his actions we find that he did not always succeed in finding the truth. Nor do we find by his actions that Friedrich saw into the thing itself, but that too is a subjective matter. Friedrich was a doer. He saw a chance to make Prussia a prominent country and he went about making it so. He was not a philosopher nor did he have any deep religious principles to guide him. Although Frederick is a calmer work Carlyle's enthusiasm has led him to distort the interpretation of the facts which he does not do in the French Revolution.

Another criticism that I have heard made about Frederick is that Carlyle repeats a great deal. I did not find this as noticeable as I expected to. At the beginning of the last volume we find a repetition of the characteristics of the hero which are just like what we found in his earlier works. But there is very little philosophizing about the hero and the sham of the times that are in Carlyle's earlier works. It is mostly narrative history. Carlyle's usual cryptic comments are interspersed throughout the volumes but they are done satiri-

cally and not in homily form. It is indirect attack rather than direct.

In one sense the whole work is a repetition. He hammers away at his hero philosophy dressing it by the means of Friedrich this time. He has become obsessed by this one idea and he does not modify or develop it by the time he gets to Frederick.

On the whole I enjoyed this history a great deal. People are the central theme around which the circumstances revolve. In spite of the weaknesses which I have pointed out the merits of the history overcome the weaknesses to a great extent. As an example of Carlyle's scholarship, humor, and human sympathy it is unexcelled.

Chapter VI

I found as I read several secondary sources that most of them agreed in their essential interpretation of Carlyle. Two magazine articles were more adverse in their criticism than the others I read. For the most part the authors traced the origins of Carlyle's hero theory, traced its development in his works, and then gave a general criticism of it.

Mr. Lehman's book[1] was the first one I read. His was a Ph.D. dissertation. It was written in a stilted style which gave me the impression that the author was not at ease when he was writing it. At times I think he was confused by Carlyle as I am also. At the beginning he discussed the theory of leadership in which he used various illustrations from history to prove that men are not born equal, but unequal. I think he spent too much time proving this point, although he does it quite well. Mr. Lehman next traces the development of the hero in Carlyle's works up to 1840. This was for the most part a resume of the works as are my first three chapters. His fourth and fifth chapters deal with the sources of the hero theory. Chapter 4 gives the sources from primitive times down to the German romanticists who he says exercised the most direct influence. Chapter 5 is the most interesting in the book. Mr. Lehman points out that the hero idea was in the air. All of Carlyle's contemporaries including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott,

1 S. H. Lehman, Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: Its Sources, Development, History, and Influence on Carlyle's Work, 1928

and Byron dealt with the hero in various aspects, either as a villain or a nobleman. The other authors I have read didn't mention this and it is a point worth noting. This is his original contribution to the subject. His criticism is similar to that of the others. He feels that Carlyle's biographic-history is of great value but that he does neglect institutions and other phases of history that are important. He does not object to Carlyle's enthusiasm which at times I found very confusing. On the whole my general criticisms of Carlyle were similar to his. The book itself did not impress me as being as scholarly piece of work as that of Mrs. Young.[2]

Mrs. Young's book is a well written. She also traces the development of Carlyle's theory of history from the German Transcendentalists. She deals more with the art of history than Mr. Lehman, who emphasizes the hero aspect of Carlyle. She of course can't escape his hero theory but it is secondary to his general philosophy of history. She makes rather a detailed comparison of his method of history with his contemporaries and his predecessors like Gibbon and Macaulay. Although she approves of certain elements in their histories which Carlyle lacks she feels that Carlyle's ability to make the reader live the part of the characters he is writing about an essential element in good history. For her the artist-historian is the best. He is very important and essential to a true understanding of history but he must combine a scienti-

2 Louise M. Young, Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939

fic approach to the subject to be the best kind of historian. Mrs. Young has a tendency to repeat her ideas in her desire to get them across. She claims that Carlyle's greatest contribution to history was his ability at character portrayal and his ability to transport the reader back into that age about which he is writing. In her desire to exonorate him she makes the statement that Carlyle has an orderly mind. That I cannot agree with. She does not give any evidence which proves it to me. To be sure, all his writing is based on one fixed idea, that of the reality of the spirit, but that is not sufficient proof of the orderliness of Carlyle's thinking. As he gathered his material I think he saw it as a unified whole, but by the time he got his material on paper the whole became disunified. We can still see the whole but its parts are not always put in the most significant relationship. Mrs. Young points out that Carlyle is above all an artist and that his critics must remember that when they are dealing with him. Of all the writers about Carlyle I came in contact with she has the most sympathy and reverence for him. For the most part this does not obscure her critical ability except when she feels compelled to say that he is a systematic thinker. She does not emphasize this point, probably because she realized that it was untenable, but she nevertheless puts it in as part of her evaluation of him.

Mr. Cazamian makes the same error that Mrs. Young did. He claimes that there is order and unity in the French Revolution. To me this was the most incoherent of Carlyle's

works. It is fascinating but is not unified. There are too many personalities popping up to allow much unity. Without the chronological order, which is the only noticeable one, the book would be impossible as a study of the French Revolution although it would still be a marvelous study of people. Mr. Cazamian admits that Carlyle disregarded certain causes of the French Revolution but that was natural with his temperament and it does not make the book less valuable. Like all the others he recognized Carlyle's hero to be a different relation to Fichte's superman. Mr. Cazamian's criticism of Frederick is quite just. He says that its main fault is its expanding quality. It grew into a history of Prussia and of eighteenth century Europe. Carlyle was also forced to fit Frederick into his hero theory. The more of these criticisms and analyses of Carlyle I read the more I was impressed with their similarity of interpretation. They all made the same essential observations with a few original comments that gave each book its individual personality.

Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson's comments on Carlyle are very interesting. He says of him, "His guiding genius is his moral sense, his perception of the sole importance of truth and justice; but it is a truth of character, not catechisms."[3] He mentions Carlyle in several of his volumes and points out some of his essential doctrines that we have already discussed in the preceding chapters of this thesis. Mr. Emerson pointed out that it took a great deal of courage for Carlyle to attack his

3 R. W. Emerson, Works, Centenary Edition, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., vol. 10 p. 495

own times and he is to be greatly admired for this conquest over the fear of social disapproval and retaliation. Like the other critics Emerson saw that Carlyle's habitual exaggeration was bad but that it had the redeeming feature that there was never a dull line in it. He felt that Carlyle's revolt to a more romantic history was fine. "Until history is interesting, it is not yet written."[4] Mr. Emerson is right about that. The relationship between Emerson and Carlyle is a fascinating one but beyond the scope of this thesis.

The other secondary sources I used were from magazine articles, most of them contemporary with Carlyle. John Stuart Mill wrote and article upon the French Revolution at the time of its appearance. It was he who was indirectly responsible for the burning of the original manuscript which Carlyle felt forced to rewrite. That must have been a terrible tragedy but Carlyle accepted it uncomplainingly, an example of his greatness of character. Mill gives quite an analysis of the book quoting a great deal to illustrate his points. Like Mr. Young he says that Carlyle's method is that of an artist, not a man of science. Mr. Mill's article is a digest of the French Revolution to acquaint the reading public with Mr. Carlyle's fine work. It is superior to the digests we have now because it included some interpretation along with the many quotations.

An article in Blackwood's Magazine for 1859 was full of adverse criticism, although some of Carlyle's redeeming features were mentioned. The author's main complaint was that

4 Ibid., vol. 12, p. 298

Carlyle's philosophy was a mirage philosophy. The truths that Carlyle was reiterating were obvious and unoriginal. But who is thoroughly original? He was repeating the truths that his age needed to realize anew. Perhaps they were obvious to the man who wrote this article, but they were not so to the majority of Carlyle's reading public. Of Frederick he says, that its worst fault was wrong emphasis. He is criticising only the first two volumes which had just appeared. Although it was supposed to be a history of Friedrich, the first volume was concerned with the history of Prussia and the second with the double marriage program which could have been dismissed in one chapter or less. The author says of Carlyle, "Where a truth is to be detected or an error exposed, who more acute? but when you look for remedy or reconstruction, you find either silence or fantasy."[5] This is an excellent summary of Carlyle's strength and weakness.

George Henry Lewes wrote an article on the first two volumes of Frederick. He defined the meaning of the term genius as the capacity to take trouble. He says that Carlyle is a man of genius and should be reverenced as such. This is a criticism of such articles as the preceding one where the authors saw a much greater weakness than strength in Carlyle. Mr. Lewes discussed Carlyle's method which is to paint vivid pictures. He admitted that they were somewhat bewildering. I don't think it is as true of Frederick as it is of the French

5"Carlyle", Blackwood's Magazine, 1850, p. 130

Revolution. It is full of quotations illustrating Carlyle's style and his analyses of Leibnitz and Voltaire. Mr. Lewes attempted to see both the good and bad side of Carlyle but his favorable impression is the stronger. I think he is right in this decision although it is helpful to read adverse criticism with an open-minded desire to see the author's viewpoint even if you come to a different conclusion.

In the Atlantic Monthly for 1857 there is an article to introduce Carlyle to the American public. It is a summary of Carlyle's life pointing out the German influence. The author then discussed Sartor Resartus which he claimed most people did not understand. He also recognized Carlyle's habit of exaggeration but he felt that it was offset by his sincerity and deep religious feeling. It is a good introduction to Carlyle that would draw people to reading him.

Mr. Towle in the Pennsylvania Monthly for 1872 said that Carlyle was a seer and prophet but not an artist. This is not a valid criticism. Carlyle's whole ability to paint vivid character sketches is a testimony to his artistic ability. He is definitely an artist rather than a scientist in his approach to history. He claimed that Carlyle's best qualities were in the French Revolution. There is more tenderness and pathos there than in his other works. But in my estimation these do not offset the incoherence which is overcome to some extent in Frederick. Frederick does not contain much tenderness but its tempo makes it a better history.

One of the best articles I read was by Mr. Trevelyan in Living Age. He saw Carlyle's power and originality. Carlyle was in the first place a poet and this quality is necessary in an historian according to Mr. Trevelyan. Carlyle was able to see the humor in history which is very important. Mr. Trevelyan felt that Carlyle did not always see the importance of institutions and the motives that moved bodies of men. But Carlyle did understand the prime motive force that caused the actions with which he dealt. This is indispensable to an historian. When we realize that Mr. Trevelyan is a fine historian this statement becomes significant. The weakness of Frederick he attributed to Carlyle's inability to understand him as he did Cromwell. In this article Mr. Trevelyan could not go into a deep analysis of Carlyle, but he saw Carlyle's essentially fine characteristics and he gives a mature and deliberate estimation of him.

The last articles I will mention are concerned with Heroes and Hero-Worship. Both of them were unfavorable. The article in the American Whig Review objects to his choice of heroes. If Carlyle used the term hero in the Greek sense, as we do, he would have to exclude Shakespeare and Johnson. The main objection to Carlyle's hero theory is his belief that an excessively great man is an excessively good man. This the author justly calims is fallacious. One look into history will prove that when we find such great men as King John of England, Peter the Great of Russia, and Prince Machiavelli.

The author also objected because Carlyle did not definitely take one side or the other in an issue. Church people, for example, can find support for their views and so can non-Church people. It seems to me the Church people did not read him very penetratingly. He does not openly attack the church but much of his satire is directed against that august body.

The article in Christian Remembrances amused me. It began by criticising Carlyle's style. The author felt that it was harsh and ill-formed. In some places this is true but for the most part it is merely cryptic rather than harsh. The author felt, as I did, that Carlyle's lack of quietness and calm was a disadvantage. The article then severely castigated Carlyle's attack on the church. It was supposedly an article on Heroes and Hero-Worship but half way through this was forgotten. The author felt that hero-worship led to idolatry, which is true. The rest of the article was a defense of orthodox Christianity. The attitude is that of injured Holiness justifying itself with a "holier than thou" attitude which I found very amusing. I felt that Carlyle's attack on the Church was much better than their attack on Carlyle. The personal antipathies of the author spoiled any argument presented. The main value of the article is its example of unsuccessful argument.

The one thing that impressed me about these secondary sources was their similarity. Each one added something but their criticisms for the most part were quite a bit alike. Perhaps part of this is due to Carlyle himself. He has one

main idea from which all his others radiate. Once that idea is mastered Carlyle is fairly simple to understand. He is not the kind of writer who is adding new discoveries all the time which serve to complicate any study of them. I don't mean to indicate that I thoroughly understand Carlyle; I don't. But I do feel that I have found his essential teaching. I can tell what they are although I can't fully explain all of them.

Chapter VII

The conclusions stated in this chapter I arrived at before reading any secondary sources. In my preceding chapter I discussed a few of these secondary sources showing where I agreed and disagreed with them.

Carlyle's theory of the hero is open to much controversy. His emphasis on good leaders is becoming more pertinent every day. We need leaders desperately who are seeking earnestly for the truth and having once found it, follow it loyally and courageously. I too am talking vaguely when I speak of seeking the truth. What do we mean by the truth. We need men who are active rather than indifferent or passive Christians. The Christian truths are the truths I think they should seek. Carlyle's truth was not merely these Christian truths found in the Bible. His truth was a transcendental one. This transcendental truth is much vaguer and less practical than the teachings of Christ. These leaders should be able to see what is best for all the people and work actively to bring this good about. These men must have controlled their selfishness and have the wisdom and vision to see beyond their little grooves. Iff they take their Christianity seriously they will find all the truth there to enable them to become good practical leaders.

Carlyle is full of vague phrases. He frequently uses the phrase, seeing through the shows of things into the thing itself. What specifically does it mean? It means recognizing

false useless coverings that obscure the reality beneath, such false coverings as the dissolute French monarchy of the eighteenth century, the disinterested English aristocracy of the same period. Carlyle does not define what he means by false worn-out clothes but his examples help us to see. Once a person becomes accustomed to such phrases he can interpret them for himself. This is helpful in some ways but for readers who need or want practical illustrations of the transcendental philosophy Carlyle is entirely too vague. For my own part I like this language and I can find a meaning in it. But I also realize that the practical application of this philosophy is the real test of its worth and Carlyle gives very little practical application.

But to get back to our hero. He must be first of all sincere, says Carlyle. But what does he mean by sincere? He doesn't tell. It is left up to the reader to interpret the term as he wishes. I think he means by the term a person who believes in something because he has found from his own experience it is right, true, not merely one who takes another's word for it. A sincere person is continually searching for the meaning in the universe and when he has found it he tells the world of it. This quality I would agree with Carlyle is essential for a hero.

As well as seeking for the true reality a hero must be loyal. Anyone who thinks about it would agree that in order to give sincerity any meaning it must be accompanied by loyalty.

Another characteristic of the hero is his lack of fear.

This is also very necessary. A man who fears is not master of himself and cannot be master over others, either directly or indirectly. Psychologists have come to realize the importance of fear in human activity, something Carlyle just hinted at, but at least it was a hint.

The last characteristic of a hero Carlyle mentions is his unconsciousness, his unawareness that he is a hero. The reason Mahomet was not as great a hero as Shakespeare or Dante was that he was trying to be one. This indicates that a hero is divine, is sent to the people; he is not a self-made man. This belief that a hero is sent is the basis for understanding Carlyle's hero. All these qualities depend upon the fact that the hero is divine, is heaven-sent to us in the hope that we will be ready to receive him. It is this characteristic of the hero that weakens the whole theory.

If heroes are sent to us can the rest of us aspire to be leaders? Evidently not. Yet Carlyle does say in one place that all of us can be heroes, that we are to work for a world of heroes. He seems to waver between the belief that a hero is sent to us and that a hero arises among the people. Unfortunately the divine idea wins out. We can all try to cultivate the characteristics of a hero even though we don't attain to one. This is the weakness of his definition. Many human beings can be sincere, loyal, without fear, unconscious of their gifts, but they are not necessarily great men; they most certainly are good men.

The one [illegible] Carlyle missed was that these great men, in addition to the characteristics he mentioned, must be able to have a universal appeal to all men. Shakespeare had it and so did Dante. Both of them are for all times as are Plato and Aristotle. If one accepts this qualification of a hero very few people could become such. We should have many fine leaders even though we have very few heroes.

Considering the hero merely a fine leader Carlyle's theory is very significant today. We need many leaders who are sincerely seeking the truth, loyal, without fear; men who have become masters of themselves so that they can become masters of mankind. If we accept the fact that such leaders are here present the outlook for the world is not very optimistic. We must educate our men and women to be leaders, not wait for them to appear. Carlyle did not say much about this; he was too romantic. We may find men who understand the fundamentals but who put them into practice. He must put these principles into practice for them to have any value. In this world it is what a person does, not what he says he believes that is of importance. Friedrich was a doer but he failed to act in agreement with the Christian principles with which he was familiar. That is why he was not a hero.

In one sense we should not condemn Carlyle for his lack of practicality. He had no intentions of being practical. He saw the evils around him and felt that hero-leaders were the cure for these ills. That is what he hammered away at all his

life. His purpose was to bring these horrible conditions before the responsible people and this he succeeded in doing superbly. He not only reached them himself but he had a profound influence upon Charles Dickens, William Thackery, Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell. These writers reached a great many more people than Carlyle alone could have. This was his great service to man and we are wrong if we say that it wasn't great. Today we would like more emphasis on the practical but such things do not come all at once and our practical schemes will be the more successful for having become acquainted with Carlyle.

Carlyle's emphasis on hero-worship is his most dangerous doctrine.[1] We saw his definition of hero-worship in Chapter III. When worship has no limits it becomes dangerous. It is too easy to lose one's head in enthusiasm for a certain individual. We see it all around us and oftentimes are guilty of it ourselves. Carlyle did not consider this a danger because he was too much a romanticist and enthusiast and at times lost his head to his emotions, both in the French Revolution and Frederick. In this day of debunking biographies we are even less sympathetic with hero-worship.

Carlyle indicates that a hero must be followed blindly. But isn't this a dangerous assertion? We look around us and see what blind worship leads to. Hitler's followers are an excellent illustration of this. People must pick their leaders intelligently and then follow them as long as they remain worthy to be followed. This is where democracy plays its part. At its best

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democracy is trying to educate the people to be capable leaders and more important intelligent followers. We have fallen far short of our goal but it is one we must strive toward. Carlyle saw the importance of universal education but he did not fell that it should be applied in this way. Universal education would make intelligent hero-worshippers; hero-worshippers that would recognize and claim a hero when he was sent to them. In the democratic interpretation universal education should teach the people to recognize a leader when he has been educated to that capacity.

Worship is bad because it too often becomes emotional. Intelligent respect and obedience leaves room for the emotions, but they are harnessed to the intellect. To use Plato's marvelous figure of speech the rational soul or intellect should be the charioteer controlling and guiding to order the fiery black and white steeds who are the appetitive and irascible souls. This transcendent wonder that Carlyle talks about rises beyond the level of the intellect. When we fix this worship on humans we are doomed to disappointment. Worship then is almost entirely emotional should be saved for our conception of God. Admiration, love, honor, respect, obedience we must have for our leaders, but not uncontrolled worship.

Carlyle is continually forced to make excuses for the weaknesses of his heroes. If they are worthy of transcendent unlimited wonder should he have to make excuses for them? I don't think so. As long as we have human beings we will have weak-

nesses. Once in a while we may find a true hero, often we should find great leaders.

What importance has this hero-theory in the general interpretation of history? The emphasis on personality is of great importance. There was a great need to break away from Dryasdust and his factual methods. Carlyle made of history a living drama with a recognition of the psychological aspects of history. Facts and circumstances are of little value if we cannot see the people who act on them and are reacted upon. Carlyle saw this and pioneered in the more personal style of history. It was a valuable service to history but in his enthusiasm he forgot the importance of circumstances. In my respect for the golden mean of Aristotle I have always felt that circumstances and individuals were of about equal importance. Sometimes one triumphs over the other but in the long run they are of equal importance. History has proved that a man must have a country ready to receive him before he can become truly great. Carlyle admits this when he says that Johnson and Burns were not as great men because the eighteenth century was not capable of hero-worship. But in both his histories it is the individual, not the circumstances that are emphasized.

In my chapters on the French Revolution and Fr[illegible] I have tried that I think of them as histories. They are too emotional and enthusiastic to be good histories but they are excellent historical dramas with a sound and scholarly basis. Unfortunately the scholarship is hidden by the emotional cover-

ing. They are fascinating as reference books but not as introductory histories.

This blind hero-worship leads to such cheapness we find in Germany, Italy, Japan, and in the United States in the case of John L. Lewis. It is not the hero theory that is to blame but the accompanying hero-worship. When we modify this hero worship into intelligent admiration and obedience we will eliminate false heroes and give an opportunity for the truly great rulers to rule.

Before I leave this general criticism I want to say a little about Carlyle's style. For the most part it is not good writing; it is too confused. In such description as of the city in Sartor Resartus, the fall of the Bastille, the Charlotte Corday incidents in the French Revolution it is excellent. But for general history this Tristram Shandy style is not good. I would hate to think what a modern writing class would say of Carlyle's style of writing. It has the merits of sympathy, human appeal, enthusiasm, but in places it lacks unity, coherence, and emphasis. In the French Revolution unity and coherence are lacking, in Frederick, the emphasis is misplaced. History, to be well done, demands a clear, comprehensive and orderly style of writing and thinking. Carlyle could see the important facts but he could not put them into orderly paragraphs, either in his mind or on paper.

Carlyle was a very necessary writer for his times and a product of the age. He began the long idea for social reform

which gained momentum as the years went by. Much of what he has had to say can be disregarded because it is a repetition of his essential philosophy which he pounds away at most of his life. But if we can keep our eye on the essentials of Carlyle and see him as a leader, not a her, of his age we will find in him a very valuable and interesting friend. And the fortunate thing about this friendship is that we can cut it off whenever it becomes repetitious and reopen it again to discover some new quality that we hadn't seen before.

Abstract

The first chapter was a miscellaneous one. It served as introduction to Carlyle and laid the basis for the succeeding chapters. Several of his essays were discussed. We found out more of thought of biographic-history in his essays on history and biography. In these his hero theory is set forth as well as his transcendental philosophy. The other important essays as well as Past and Present deal with the terrible economic and social conditions of England and Carlyle's suggestions for remedying them. His remedy is a call for hero-leaders. Here Carlyle appears as an aristocrat and an enemy to democracy. Carlyle is a social reformer fighting the mechanism and skepticism of the eighteenth century. He is insisting that man can be master of his fate, that he is not a machine. In general the first chapter gives Carlyle's main principles upon which his later writings are based.

Sartor Resartus continues the study of Carlyle's philosophy. The influence of German romanticism becomes even more marked. In the story of Professor Teufelsdroeckh there is also much of the life and emotions of Thomas himself. Carlyle shows his love for Sterne in his style in this book. It is a delightful work full of human interest and passages of good writing. The especially fine ones were the description of the city, of the Teufelsdroeckh household, and the Poor-slave Household. Diogenes' struggles for a faith are those of Carlyle. The whole

clothes philosophy is based on the transcendental belief in the reality of the spirit. This chapter had little to do specifically with the hero theory but it further developed the philosophy behind this theory.

Heroes and Hero-Worship formed the subject of the third chapter. This was a series of lectures given in 1840. In them Carlyle names six heroes: the hero as divinity, as prophet, as poet, as priest, as a man of letters, and as a king. Each succeeding hero is a development and cumulation of the preceding ones. The main characteristics of the hero were sincerity, a search for the true spirit behind the universe. All the men he chose were heroes to a greater or less extent. They are not perfect and some have more prominence than others. The book is not as good as some of his other works; it lacks the depth of Sartor Resartus.

Chapter IV dealt with the French Revolution. It is the kind of history one would expect Carlyle to write. It is a series of kaleidoscopic pictures revolving around different individuals. The whole history is a melodrama. This superenthusiastic style is excellent for such scenes as the fall of the Bastille day and Charlotte Corday but it is not good for a whole history. This sensationalism makes the book confused. It lacks the unity of a central character and the coherence of an orderly plan. It is a book to be read a little at a time to be enjoyed. For a reference book it is excellent but for an introductory history it is not of much value.

Frederick the Great is also typical of Carlyle. It has the unity of a central character which makes it easier to read. It is better than that of the French Revolution. It is full of interesting anecdotes and stories about the many people that appear in it. These details show the almost unbelievably thorough scholarship of the work. There is too much emphasis on the battles of Frederick although they are enlivened by many stories. Carlyle is too much influenced by his hero theory in the book. He felt compelled to force Frederick into a hero, a role which the evidence shows did not fit him. In spite of its weaknesses it is a better history than the French Revolution.

The sixth chapter is concerned with secondary sources. There are some modern criticisms as well as contemporary magazine articles. Most of them reached the same general conclusions about Carlyle's general weakness and strength. There are a few original comments but they are not on the essentials of Carlyle's philosophy.

The last chapter includes my conclusions about Carlyle which I formulated before I read any secondary sources. Carlyle's hero theory is good if we allow for the idea that he is divinely sent. The danger in this philosophy is the hero-worship element. This leads to false heroes who are followed blindly by the common herd. Carlyle's style of writing itself is not good. It at times lacks unity, coherence, and emphasis, three essentials to good writing.

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